ELEGIE

BY

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The SECOND EDITION.

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MDCCLXIII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

ELEGY I.

To a YOUNG NOBLEMAN

Leaving the Univerſity.

E'ER yet, ingenuous Youth, thy ſteps retire
From Cam's ſmooth margin, and the peaceful vale.
Where Science call'd thee to her ſtudious quire,
And met thee muſing in her cloyſters pale;
O! let thy friend (and may he boaſt the name)
Breath from his artleſs reed one parting lay;
A lay like this thy early Virtues claim,
And this let voluntary Friendſhip pay.

Yet know, the time arrives, the dangerous time,
When all thoſe Virtues, opening now ſo fair,
Tranſplanted to the world's tempeſtuous clime,
Muſt learn each Paſſion's boiſt'rous breath to bear.
There, if Ambition peſtilent and pale,
Or Luxury ſhould taint their vernal glow;
If cold Self-intereſt, with her chilling gale,
Should blaſt th'unfolding bloſſoms e'er they blow;
If mimic hues, by Art, or Faſhion ſpread,
Their genuine, ſimple colouring ſhould ſupply,
O! with them may theſe laureate honors fade;
And with them (if it can) my Friendſhip die.
Then do not blame, if, tho' thyſelf inſpire,
Cautious I ſtrike the panegyric ſtring;
The Muſe full oft purſues a meteor fire,
And, vainly ventrous, ſoars on waxen wing.

Too actively awake at Friendſhip's voice,
The Poet's boſom pours the fervent ſtrain,
Till ſad Reflexion blames the haſty choice,
And oft invokes Oblivion's aid in vain.
Call we the Shade of POPE, from that bleſt bower
Where thron'd he ſits with many a tuneful Sage;
Aſk, if he ne'er bemoans that hapleſs hour
When ST. JOHN's name * illumin'd Glory's page?
Aſk, if the wretch, who dar'd his mem'ry ſtain,
Aſk, if his country's, his religion's foe
Deſerv'd the meed that MARLBRO' fail'd to gain,
The deathleſs meed, he only could beſtow?

NOTE.

* Alluding to this couplet of Mr. POPE's,
To CATO VIRGIL paid one honeſt line,
O let my Country's friends *illumine* mine.

The Bard will tell thee, the misguided praise
Clouds the cœlestial sunshine of his breast;
Ev'n now, repentant of his erring Lays,
He heaves a sigh amid the realms of rest.
Pope thro' friendship fail'd, indignant view,
Yet pity Dryden; hark, whene'er he sings,
How Adulation drops her courtly dew
On titled Rhymers, and inglorious Kings.
See, from the depths of his exhaustless mine,
His glittering stores the tuneful Spendthrift throws;
Where Fear, or Interest bids, behold they shine;
Now grace a Cromwell's, now a Charles's brows.
Born with too generous, or too mean a heart,
Dryden! in vain to thee those stores were lent:
Thy sweetest numbers but a trifling Art;
Thy strongest diction idly eloquent.

The ſimpleſt Lyre, if Truth directs its Lays,
Warbles a melody ne'er heard from thine:
Not to diſguſt with falſe, or venal praiſe,
Was PARNELL's modeſt fame, and may be mine.
Go then, my Friend, nor let thy candid breaſt
Condemn me, if I check the plauſive ſtring;
Go to the wayward world; compleat the reſt;
Be, what the pureſt Muſe would wiſh to ſing.
Be ſtill thyſelf; that open path of Truth,
Which led thee here, let Manhood firm purſue;
Retain the ſweet ſimplicity of Youth,
And, all thy virtue dictates, dare to do.
Still ſcorn, with conſcious pride, the maſk of Art;
On vices front let fearful caution lour,
And teach the diffident, diſcreeter part
Of knaves that plot, and fools that fawn for Power.

So,

So, round thy brow when Age's honours ſpread,
When Death's cold hand unſtrings thy MASON's lyre,
When the green turf lies lightly on his head,
Thy worth ſhall ſome ſuperior bard inſpire:
He, to the ampleſt bounds of Time's domain,
On Rapture's plume ſhall give thy Name to fly;
For truſt, with reverence truſt this * Sabine ſtrain:
"The Muſe forbids the virtuous Man to die."

Written in 1753.

NOTE.

*——Dignum laude Virum.
Muſa vetat mori. HORACE.

ELEGY

ELEGY II.

Written in the GARDEN of a FRIEND.

WHILE o'er my head this laurel-woven bower
Its arch of glittering verdure wildly flings,
Can Fancy ſlumber? can the tuneful Power,
That rules my lyre, neglect her wonted ſtrings?
No; if the blighting Eaſt deform'd the plain,
If this gay bank no balmy ſweets exhal'd,
Still ſhould the grove re-echo to my ſtrain,
And friendſhip prompt the theme, where beauty fail'd.

For he, whoſe careleſs art this foliage dreſt,
Who bad theſe twiſting braids of woodbine bend,
He firſt, with truth and virtue, taught my breaſt
Where beſt to chuſe, and beſt to fix a friend.
How well does Mem'ry note the golden day,
What time, reclin'd in Marg'rets ſtudious glade,
My mimic reed firſt tun'd the * Dorian Lay,
" Unſeen, unheard, beneath an hawthorn ſhade?"
'Twas there we met; the Muſes hail'd the hour;
The ſame deſires, the ſame ingenuous arts
Inſpir'd us both; we own'd and bleſt the power
That join'd at once our ſtudies, and our hearts.

NOTE.

* MUSÆUS, the firſt Poem which the Author publiſhed, written while he was a Scholar of St. John's College in Cambridge.

O! ſince thoſe days, when Science ſpread the feaſt,
When emulative Youth its reliſh lent,
Say, has one genuine Joy e'er warm'd my breaſt?
Enough; if Joy was his, be mine Content.
To thirſt for praiſe his temperate Youth forbore;
He fondly wiſh'd not for a Poet's name;
Much did he love the Muſe, but Quiet more,
And, tho' he might command, he ſlighted Fame.
Hither, in manhood's prime, he wiſely fled
From all that Folly, all that Pride approves;
To this ſoft ſcene a tender Partner led;
This laurel ſhade was witneſs to their loves.
" Begone," he cry'd, " Ambition's air-drawn plan;
" Hence with perplexing pomp, unwieldy wealth:
" Let me not ſeem, but be the happy man,
" Poſſeſt of Love, of Competence, and Health."

Smiling he ſpake, nor did the Fates withſtand;
In rural arts the peaceful moments flew:
Say, lovely Lawn! that felt his forming hand,
How ſoon thy ſurface ſhone with verdure new,
How ſoon obedient FLORA brought her ſtore,
And o'er thy breaſt a ſhower of fragrance flung:
VERTUMNUS came; his earlieſt blooms he bore,
And thy rich ſides with waving purple hung:
Then to the ſight, he call'd yon ſtately ſpire,
He pierc'd th'oppoſing oak's luxuriant ſhade;
Bad yonder crouding hawthorns low retire,
Nor veil the glories of the golden mead.
Hail, ſylvan wonders, hail; and hail the hand,
Whoſe native taſte thy native charms diſplay'd,
And taught one little acre to command
Each envied happineſs of ſcene, and ſhade.

Is there a hill, whoſe diſtant azure bounds
The ample range of Scarſdale's proud domain,
A mountain hoar, that yon wild Peak ſurrounds,
But lends a willing beauty to thy plain?
And, lo! in yonder path I ſpy my friend;
He looks the guardian genius of the grove,
Mild as * the fabled Form that whilom deign'd,
At MILTON's call, in Harefield's haunts to rove.

NOTE.

* See the Deſcription of the Genius of the Wood, in MILTON's Arcades.

For know, by lot, from Jove, I am the Power
Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bower;
To nurſe the Saplings tall, and curl the grove
With ringlets quaint, &c.

Bleſt Spirit, come! tho' pent in mortal mould,
I'll yet invoke thee by that purer name;
O come, a Portion of thy bliſs unfold,
From Folly's maze my wayward ſtep reclaim.
Too long, alas, my inexperienc'd youth,
Miſled by flattering Fortune's ſpecious tale,
Has left the rural reign of Peace, and Truth,
The huddling brook, cool cave, and whiſpering vale.
Won to the world, a candidate for praiſe,
Yet, let me boaſt, by no ignoble art,
Too oft the public ear has heard my lays,
Too much its vain applauſe has touch'd my heart;
But now, e'er Cuſtom binds his powerful chains,
Come, from the baſe enchanter ſet me free,
While yet my ſoul its firſt, beſt taſte retains,
Recall that ſoul to reaſon, peace, and thee.

Teach

Teach me, like thee, to muſe on Nature's page,
To mark each wonder in Creation's plan,
Each mode of being trace, and, humbly ſage,
Deduce from theſe the genuine powers of Man;
Of Man, while warm'd with reaſon's purer ray,
No tool of policy, no dupe to pride;
Before vain Science led his taſte aſtray;
When conſcience was his law, and God his guide.
This let me learn, and learning let me live
The leſſon o'er. From that great Guide of Truth
O may my ſuppliant ſoul the boon receive
To tread thro' age the footſteps of thy youth.

Written in 1758.

ELEGY

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ELEGY III.

On the DEATH of a LADY.

THE midnight clock has toll'd; and hark, the bell
Of Death beats ſlow! heard ye the note profound?
It pauſes now; and now, with riſing knell,
Flings to the hollow gale its ſullen ſound.
Yes *** is dead. Attend the ſtrain,
Daughters of Albion! Ye that, light as air,
So oft have tript in her fantaſtic train,
With hearts as gay, and faces half as fair:

For ſhe was fair beyond your brighteſt bloom:
(This Envy owns, ſince now her bloom is fled)
Fair as the Forms that, wove in Fancy's loom,
Float in light viſion round the Poet's head.
Whene'er with ſoft ſerenity ſhe ſmil'd,
Or caught the orient bluſh of quick ſurprize,
How ſweetly mutable, how brightly wild,
The liquid luſtre darted from her eyes?
Each look, each motion wak'd a new-born grace,
That o'er her form its tranſient glory caſt:
Some lovelier wonder ſoon uſurp'd the place,
Chas'd by a charm ſtill lovelier than the laſt.
That bell again! It tells us what ſhe is:
On what ſhe was no more the ſtrain prolong:
Luxuriant Fancy pauſe: an hour like this
Demands the tribute of a ſerious Song.

MARIA claims it from that sable bier,
Where cold and wan the slumberer rests her head;
In still small whispers to reflection's ear,
She breathes the solemn dictates of the Dead.
O catch the awful notes, and lift them loud;
Proclaim the theme, by Sage, by Fool rever'd;
Hear it, ye Young, ye Vain, ye Great, ye Proud!
'Tis Nature speaks, and Nature will be heard.
Yes, ye shall hear, and tremble as ye hear,
While, high with health, your hearts exulting leap:
Ev'n in the midst of pleasure's mad career,
The mental Monitor shall wake and weep.
For say, than ***'s propitious star,
What brighter planet on your births arose;
Or gave of Fortune's gifts an ampler share,
In life to lavish, or by death to lose!

Early to loſe; while, born on buſy wing,
Ye ſip the nectar of each varying bloom:
Nor fear, while baſking in the beams of ſpring,
The wintry ſtorm that ſweeps you to the tomb.
Think of her Fate! revere the heav'nly hand
That led her hence, though ſoon, by ſteps ſo ſlow;
Long at her couch Death took his patient ſtand,
And menac'd oft, and oft withheld the blow:
To give Reflection time, with lenient art,
Each fond deluſion from her ſoul to ſteal;
Teach her from Folly peaceably to part,
And wean her from a world ſhe lov'd ſo well.
Say, are ye ſure his Mercy ſhall extend
To you ſo long a ſpan? Alas, ye ſigh:
Make then, while yet ye may, your God your friend,
And learn with equal eaſe to ſleep or die!

Nor think the Muſe, whoſe ſober voice ye hear,
Contracts with bigot frown her ſullen brow;
Caſts round Religion's orb the miſts of fear,
Or ſhades with horrors, what with ſmiles ſhould glow.
No; ſhe would warm you with ſeraphic fire,
Heirs as ye are of heav'n's eternal day;
Would bid you boldly to that heav'n aſpire,
Not ſink and ſlumber in your cells of clay.
Know, ye were form'd to range yon azure field,
In yon æthereal founts of bliſs to lave;
Force then, ſecure in Faith's protecting ſhield,
The Sting from Death, the Vict'ry from the Grave.
Is this the bigot's rant? Away ye Vain,
Your hopes, your fears in doubt, in dulneſs ſteep:
Go ſooth your ſouls in ſickneſs, grief, or pain,
With the ſad ſolace of eternal ſleep.

Yet will I praiſe you, triflers as ye are,
More than thoſe Preachers of your fav'rite creed,
Who proudly ſwell the brazen throat of War,
Who form the Phalanx, bid the battle bleed;
Nor wiſh for more: who conquer, but to die.
Hear, Folly, hear; and triumph in the tale:
Like you, they reaſon; not, like you, enjoy
The breeze of bliſs, that fills your ſilken ſail:

NOTE.

In a book of *French* verſes, entitled *Oeuvres du Philoſophe de ſans Souci*, and lately reprinted at *Berlin* by authority, under the title of *Poeſies Diverſes*, may be found an epiſtle to Marſhal KEITH, written profeſſedly againſt the immortality of the Soul. By way of ſpecimen of the whole, take the following lines.

De l'avenir, cher KEITH, jugeons par le paſſé;
Comme avant que je fuſſe il n'avoit point penſé,
De meme, apres ma mort, quand toutes mes parties
Par le corruption ſeront aneanties,
Par un meme deſtin il ne penſera plus;
Non, rien n'eſt plus certain, ſoyons-en convaincu &c.

It is to this epiſtle, that the reſt of the Elegy alludes.

On Pleaſure's glitt'ring ſtream ye gayly ſteer
Your little courſe to cold oblivion's ſhore:
They dare the ſtorm, and, through th'inclement year,
Stem the rough ſurge, and brave the torrent's roar.
Is it for Glory? that juſt Fate denies.
Long muſt the Warrior moulder in his ſhroud,
E'er from her trump the heav'n-breath'd accents riſe,
That lift the Hero from the fighting croud.
Is it his graſp of Empire to extend?
To curb the fury of inſulting foes?
Ambition, ceaſe: the idle conteſt end:
'Tis but a Kingdom thou canſt win or loſe.
And why muſt murder'd myriads loſe their all,
(If Life be all) why deſolation lour,
With famiſh'd frown, on this affrighted ball,
That thou may'ſt flame the meteor of an hour?

Go

Go wiſer ye, that flutter Life away,
Crown with the mantling Juice the goblet high;
Weave the light dance, with feſtive freedom gay,
And live your moment, ſince the next ye die.
Yet know, vain Scepticks, know, th'Almighty mind,
Who breath'd on Man a portion of his fire,
Bad his free Soul, by earth nor time confin'd,
To Heav'n, to Immortality aſpire.
Nor ſhall the Pile of Hope, his Mercy rear'd,
By vain Philoſophy be e'er deſtroy'd:
Eternity, by all or wiſh'd or fear'd,
Shall be by all or ſuffer'd or enjoy'd.

Written in 1760.

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